

July 29, 2003

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**EXTENDED AREA SERVICE BALLOTS MAILED TO CRESTON**

LINCOLN – Ballots to determine whether extended area service will be offered between Creston and Columbus have been mailed to subscribers of the Creston telephone exchange.

Qwest, the local telephone provider for Creston, mailed the ballots July 18. One ballot is permitted for each telephone account on the Creston exchange. Ballots must be returned to the Nebraska Public Service Commission by August 21.

Acting on petitions from Creston telephone customers, the Nebraska Public Service Commission authorized the balloting following a public meeting in Creston and a study of the telephone traffic between the two communities by the two local telephone companies. Columbus is served by Frontier, a division of Citizens Communications.

Qwest proposes a monthly additive of \$1.80 for Creston residential customers and \$2 per line for business customers. Creston currently has extended area service with Humphrey at a rate of 50 cents and one dollar for residential and business users, respectively.

Columbus customers of Frontier will not be balloted. Frontier asked the PSC to waive the ballot requirement because the proposed additive for Columbus customers is five cents per month.

Fourth District Commissioner Rod Johnson of Sutton, who represents both communities said, "The Creston community has taken the steps necessary for the Commission to conduct this ballot for EAS. Support for the services was demonstrated by the large turn-out at the informational meeting held in Creston on May 21, 2003."

For extended area service to be approved, one more than half of the Creston customers returning the ballot must vote in favor of the proposal. If it is successful, extended area service will be mandatory for all Creston and Columbus telephone subscribers.

The ballots must be signed, dated, and the telephone number listed to be counted by the PSC. Anyone who has not received a ballot who is a Creston telephone subscriber may contact the Nebraska Public Service Commission at 1-800-526-0017.

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Send to: Columbus Telegram, Columbus radio stations, Leigh World at the Colfax County Press in Clarkson, and the Humphrey Democrat. Also, the Omaha World-Herald and Associated Press.